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**PROBLEMS OF BEGGARS AND BEGGAR HOMES
IN RELIGIOUS CENTRES**

**A. JOSHI
Y.P. SINGH**



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**GIRI INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
Sector D, Aliganj Housing Scheme
LUCKNOW 226 024**

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I. INTRODUCTION

In India the concept of begging is very old and its origin can be traced to the socio-religious values of our society in which giving alms, to those who have renounced the world, was considered a noble and religious act. There is clear reference to 'bhiksha' (alms) in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. Even Muslims believe in 'zakat'. However, in the early period taking alms was neither widespread nor thought of as a profession. Consequently this activity was restricted to the religious mendicants only who went around begging for their daily meal and that too from only a few houses. However, as years went by the concept of begging did not remain confined to only the religious mendicants and a number of other persons also took up this activity for one reason or the other.

Begging is primarily indicative of the absolute failure on the part of an individual to function effectively and in a normal way within the society of which he is an integral part. The individual, in question, has been unsuccessful in

finding gainful employment and to that extent even the society has failed to give him his due. Any society which can not even ensure gainful employment to a large number of persons automatically gets reduced to one with a high degree of social disorganisation. On the other hand, the inability on the part of an individual to function effectively, reflects a form of personal disorganisation.

It is not always proper to offer a comprehensive and precise definition of beggary since it exists in various forms. However, for the sake of convenience and simplicity beggary may be defined as an act of soliciting or receiving cash or kind, in a public or private place without doing any work in exchange for the money received.

The fact that begging has both socio-cultural and economic ramifications, makes it rather complex. It acts as a drain on socio-cultural development and manifests itself as a rather degrading form of human existence. Although the major factors which compell people to take up to begging are poverty, deprivation and neglect, but this problem has been perpetuated further through the tradition of offering alms having a clearcut religious sanction in all religions being practiced in the country.

Begging is a psycho-socio pathological phenomenon. It is observed that people suffering from any physical disability such as blindness, loss of limb, etc. or those who

are economically deprived, generally have a weak will power and they suffer from an inherent feeling of insecurity. They are, therefore, the victims of a sense of helplessness and dependency. Such a feeling is even more pronounced in a society which is free and competitive and gets compounded further if the society does not offer in-built care institutions such as the joint family system, old homes and vocational training centres for rehabilitation of the deprived persons.

In India a high percentage of beggars are destitutes and since different religions encourage unquestioned charity, beggary tends to thrive under such an atmosphere of charity. Charity may be a virtue but if it is not rationalised or institutionalised, it may lead to undesirable consequences including crime. Begging, therefore, needs to be discouraged since it has many evils. To begin with a beggar is reduced to a human being whose personality is one of complete dependence and constant expectation. Once an individual takes up to begging he totally gives up the feeling of shame, confidence, intelligence and self-esteem. He is reduced to a demoralised person who does not hesitate to lie, impersonate, adopt any foul trick or even indulge in criminal acts. The able bodied beggars, in particular, are a threat to public peace and security and charity is totally wasted on them. Thus it may be said that the beggar population constitutes a parasitic section of the society which is totally non-productive and so a drain on our natural resources. They are

also a health hazard as they are generally unkempt and dirty and it is a common sight to see beggars having communicable diseases roaming all over the place.

In a welfare state it becomes the primary duty of the state to provide adequate security to its citizens, especially to the poorest and the most vulnerable sections of the society. The development of social welfare activities over the Five Year Plans reveals that it was during the Second Plan the greater stress was laid on the development of institutional services catering to the specific requirements of handicapped persons, children, destitute women and beggars.

The Anti-Beggary Act was passed in 1975 and the Act clearly defines begging and specifies the procedure to be adopted for catching beggars and giving them appropriate punishment. There are nine state run beggar homes functioning in the state where people caught begging are detained for a period ranging from a minimum of one and upto two years. However, despite the fact that a good deal of social legislation has been enacted since Independence there is a need to scrutinise the legislation with a view to ascertaining its adequacy and the modifications which may be required to make it really effective. This paper is the outcome of a research study carried out by us with the following broad objectives:

- (a) To analyse the factors responsible for forcing people to take up to begging;
- (b) To analyse the socio-economic conditions under which an individual was living prior to his becoming a beggar;
- (c) To analyse the present income and expenditure levels of the beggars along with their demographic structure and socio-economic conditions;
- (d) To find out those factors which force individuals to beg despite the fact that the Anti-Beggary Act exists and the government provides vocational training in the state run beggar homes;
- (e) To identify factors which could help in bringing about a change in the attitudes of beggars such that they start earning a living through more respectable means; and,
- (f) To offer suggestions in the legislation as well as in the functioning of the Beggar Homes so as to be able to reduce the menace of begging.

The four religious centres selected for the study were Ayodhya, Hardwar (Rishikesh), Mathura (Brindawan) and Varanasi. A sample of 125 beggars was selected from each religious centre and so a total of 500 beggars were surveyed by us. As far as the beggars are concerned we took a stratified sample based on five different categories of beggars, i.e. the religious mendicants, child beggars, female beggars, able-bodied beggars and the disabled and aged beggars and gave equal representation to each category.

Over and above the 500 beggars which were surveyed from the religious centres we also decided to have a sample of around 15 inmates from each of the beggar homes. Since inmates were found only in the beggar homes located in Hardwar and Varanasi we have covered a total of 30 inmates as well.

Beggary has not been treated as a Central subject and the respective State Governments are expected to look into the problems of beggary and means to be adopted for its prevention. Most of the states and Union Territories have enacted laws to prohibit beggary. However, the approach for tackling this problem is based primarily on punitive devices with very little input of rehabilitation. Moreover, no separate strategy has been devised to deal with different categories of beggars in accordance to the specific problems attached with each category.

The Directorate of Social Welfare has a section which is dealing with the problem of beggary. The section is headed by the Project Officer but has only a skeleton staff comprising of one senior and one junior typist in the head office. When the Prevention of Beggary Act was passed in 1975 beggar homes were set up in eight districts. In Faizabad there are separate homes for male and female beggars and so the total number of beggar homes is nine. Each home has a capacity to keep 200 inmates. A few of these homes had been functioning even before 1975. Out of the nine homes those located at Hardwar and Varanasi are oldest and were established in 1957. Each beggar home is headed by a Superintendent and the staff working under him comprises of supervisors, teachers, trainers, clerks, nurse/compounder, cook, sweeper, watchman, etc. The actual staff varies between different beggar homes.

In order to catch beggars, the procedure laid down under the act have to be followed strictly. The raid is conducted by the police on the request of the Superintendent and those caught are placed and tried in front of a judicial magistrate. Once the magistrate is convinced that the individual is a beggar, he can sentence them to be kept in the beggar home for periods ranging from a minimum of one year and upto two years. Beggars sentenced to serve a term in the beggar home have to be medically examined by a certified doctor and the authorities have to send information to their family members about their detention in the beggar home. To cover the expenses on inmates related to their food, clothing and other requirements an amount of Rupees eight is sanctioned per person per day. Vocational training is provided to the inmates so as to train them adequately into some economic activity such that they can take up a respectable profession on being released. There is also the provision to pay Rs.1500 to each inmate in order to assist him in his rehabilitation.

If we look at the total expenditure of the Directorate of Social Welfare on the aspect of beggary we find that around rupees one crore are spent per year on the nine beggar homes which the directorate is running plus on the staff which is posted in the Directorate itself. However, a big chunk out of the total allocated funds are being spent on the establishment since expenditure on this head accounts for over 80 per cent of total expenses. The amount which is

actually being spent on the inmates is barely around 8-10 per cent of the total expenditure. Over the years the Directorate has been setting aside higher amounts of money for the beggary aspect but the pay and other allowances of the staff have also been steadily increasing and so the share of expenditure on inmates keeps fluctuating around the same percentage. Besides this, if we look at the overall expenditure of the Directorate, the amount spent for controlling beggary is a negligible amount of the total expenditure. In fact, this share has been steadily declining between 1992-93 and 1995-96 and in percentage terms the figure has declined from 6.3 to 3.7 per cent between the two points of time.

We will now briefly highlight the main findings of our study.

II. FINDINGS RELATED TO THE SELECTED BEGGAR HOMES

The four religious centres have, between them, five beggar homes since Ayodhya has separate homes for males and females respectively. The beggar homes of Hardwar and Varanasi are the oldest in the state and had been established in 1957. The male beggar home of Ayodhya is functioning since 1969. The remaining two homes were established after the anti-beggary act was passed. Only Varanasi had a full time Superintendent. In all the other places the post of Superintendent has been lying vacant for approximately two

years. The total staff in these beggar homes fluctuate between sixteen (Hardwar) and twenty-three (Varanasi).

At the time of our field survey inmates were found only in Hardwar and Varanasi and each had 15 and 100 inmates respectively. In the remaining three beggar homes there have been no inmates for almost two years.

By and large the condition of the building of the five beggar homes is very bad with the exception of Ayodhya where it was only relatively better. In most of the beggar homes the security position is very poor and that is partly the reason why the authorities are reluctant to keep inmates. The problem of security is further accentuated by the fact that each home has only one watchman. These homes, therefore, need sufficient watchmen to perform duties on shifts of eight hours each.

Since the buildings are ill maintained and in a dilapidated condition, the living conditions are extremely unhygienic. The toilets are in a very poor condition. Even the rooms which serve as office rooms and the kitchen were found in a deplorable condition.

As far as the financial position of these beggar homes is concerned it is found that the annual grant-in-aid received is generally higher than the actual expenditure incurred during the year. Between 1992-93 and 1996-97 the grant-in-aid has been gradually increasing and so has the

expenditure. There is a variation in the total grant received by a beggar home and the actual amount is determined by the staff, expenses on the establishment and expenditure on the inmates. It is sad to note that each beggar home is spending an average of Rs.10 lakh per year and yet in three beggar homes there have been no inmates for over two years. Hardwar had only 15 and even in Varanasi the number was 100. Thus the very purpose for which these homes have been established, is being defeated.

One major drawback with respect to keeping inmates is that adequate co-operation is not being received from the police department without which the beggar home officials become helpless. The other difficulty is that in a public place it becomes extremely difficult for the authorities to conduct a raid. This is so because the general public, temple priests and some interested persons who earn a living through the beggars, offer a stiff resistance whenever the police round up beggars and take them into their custody. As a consequence the only place where raids are generally being carried out is the railway station. And finally even the judges at times adopt a lenient attitude especially in the case of the religious mendicants and release them either on their own or on the basis of a personal bond. A serious problem arising out of raids on the railway station is that even innocent individuals get caught. They too have to be released once it is ascertained that they are not beggars.

The provision of rupees eight per day per inmate to take care of their requirements such as food, clothing and other things, is highly inadequate considering the existing price index. In fact, it is not even possible to provide the inmates proper meals per day within eight rupees. In the beggar homes at Hardwar as well as Varanasi the authorities have been spending in excess of rupees eight per day and the officials at the Directorate of Social Welfare, clear these bills because the Directorate accepts the fact that two meals can not be provided to anyone for eight rupees per day. This amount needs to be increased to rupees five hundred fifty per month. Our own observation in Varanasi was that the quality of rations was so poor that it was absolutely unfit for human consumption.

One of the basic objectives of these beggar homes is to provide vocational training to the inmates such that they may take up a respectable profession after being released from the beggar home. It is observed that quite a number of inmates are released after the remand period that may be between 14 days and upto a couple of months. As a result no inmate can acquire any skill in a month or two and the very purpose of the vocational training is defeated. Besides this the beggar homes do not have sufficient funds to purchase the raw materials required to provide vocational training properly. And finally, there is no follow up programme of the government through which it can ensure that the inmates, after being released from the beggar home, take up an

occupation in accordance to the vocational training received by them. Consequently, it is a common practice that the inmates start begging soon after they are released.

III. BACKGROUND AND CONDITIONS OF THE INMATES IN THE BEGGAR HOMES

As has already been pointed out, only the beggar homes of Hardwar and Varanasi had inmates living in them. On the basis of the information collected from the inmates it was found that a high percentage of them belong to SC/ST and backward class. They were mainly in the 25-40 year age group. Over half of them were illiterate. Even those who had received some schooling, the maximum educational qualification was class VIII. It was interesting to note that almost half of them were from outside UP and these states included the far off states such as West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Since the authorities have little choice but to conduct raids at the railway station, a majority of the inmates had been rounded up on the railway platforms of Hardwar and Varanasi. A few, however, had also been rounded up around Hari-ki-Pauri in the case of Hardwar. Nearly one-third of the inmates deny that they are beggars and many of them complained that their next of kin have not been informed about their remand in the beggar home. Out of those who admit that they are beggars, the duration since they have

been begging ranges from around 2 to over 5 years. All of them have been begging either because they were previously unemployed or were doing jobs which were low paid and strenuous. Around two-thirds of the beggars informed that their family is unaware of the fact that they are beggars.

Over two-thirds of the inmates are facing problems in the beggar homes. The most disturbing aspects are the poor quality of food and hygiene and the fact that they are being kept in close confinement of the beggar home without the liberty to live according to their wishes.

In their opinion the vocational training is not useful since the training is not being provided properly and in the case of Varanasi the complaint is that no training is being given to them.

A very disturbing aspect of the psychology of the inmates was that around half the beggars do not think that there is anything disrespectable about begging. However, some admitted that they would like to take up another job when they are released from the beggar home. Yet another disturbing feature which we observed was that a large number of the beggars were addicted to smoking, chewing tobacco and even drugs. The beggar home is expected to provide medical care to the inmates. However, our observation as well as the opinion of the inmates indicated that adequate arrangement for medical facilities do not exist in these beggar homes.

In response to their views for controlling begging, they identified certain areas where the government must pay special attention since these factors were directly contributing towards the high incidence of beggary in the state. The inmates felt that the government must ensure that sufficient avenues of gainful employment should be generated.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE BEGGARS LIVING IN THE RELIGIOUS CENTRES

While analysing the general background of the beggars it was observed that around 42 per cent belonged to SC/ST group and another 26 per cent to other backward classes. The average age worked out to be 39 years. As can be expected, over three-fourths of them were illiterate and barely 14 per cent had received formal education. Among the different categories the religious mendicants were more literate than the others and a high proportion of them also belonged to the higher castes. A negligible proportion of the total respondents (around 2 per cent) owned agricultural land.

The average size of the family, in the case of the beggar households, was rather low (average 2.12). All the categories of beggars except for the child beggars, had a small family size. Even in the case of the child beggars the average family size was around 3 only. A high percentage of the family members were illiterate (around 80 per cent). However, since the beggars belong to the lowest economic strata of the population, a very high percentage of the

family members (almost 75 per cent) are employed. The employed persons include children in the school going age group as well as aged persons.

Only around one-third of the total respondents were local beggars belonging to the same district. Among these slightly above fifty per cent have an urban background. In the case of non-local, or migrant beggars, only around one-third belong to other districts of Uttar Pradesh whereas the rest are migrants belonging to other states. Among the other states Bihar and West Bengal head the list. The concentration of migrants was in the group which had migrated between 1981 and 1990. The most significant factors forcing these people to migrate are poverty and lack of employment opportunities in their native place. A very high percentage of these migrant beggars have a rural origin. Even among the employed persons from the migrant households 95 per cent are also beggars. Less than ten per cent of the employed persons have a secondary occupation.

Looking at the housing and living conditions of the beggars it is revealed that almost one-third do not have any shelter. They are, therefore, primarily living on railway platforms or verandahs of shops, etc. Out of those who have a house around 55 per cent are living in small huts and another 27 per cent in kutcha houses. Only 29 per cent of those having any living accommodation have toilet facilities and around 57 per cent have access to drinking water.

Only 2 per cent claim they are being forced into begging and of these half are being forced by their family members. The rest, after becoming religious mendicants, are being forced by the other "Sadhus" to earn a living through begging. Because of their poverty and inability secure a job they have been begging for long periods of time. Around 50 per cent of these beggars have been begging for over 10 years. Even in the case of the child beggars we notice that over 60 per cent of these children have been begging for a period ranging between 3-10 years. Their choice of location in favour of the religious centre, has mainly been influenced by the fact that being a religious centre they will be able to get alms easily and in adequate quantity.

Since the earnings are low, almost 80 per cent have to beg daily. Almost two-thirds report that they do not face much of a difficulty in receiving alms but an equal number complain that their daily earnings are not sufficient to take care of their daily requirements. As far as the pattern of begging is concerned around half of them beg at fixed places every day while the other half are mobile.

It was disappointing to note that only 17 per cent of the beggars ever thought of changing their profession and that only 11 per cent actually made an effort at doing so. Out of those who tried, the reasons for their failure were their inability to get service of their preference or their inability to secure sufficient resources to become self employed.

While around 98 per cent of the respondents do not want their children to become beggars on growing up, only 28 per cent of the households, with children in the school going age group, are sending their children to school. The reasons for not educating children are their inability to afford education, the lack of interest on the part of children for education and the fact that many children also earn and contribute towards the family income.

The leisure time of the beggars is mainly spent on resting, entertainment and other activities such as household work and praying.

It was found that around half the respondents are aware of the fact that government has passed a legislation against begging and is running beggar homes where vocational training is provided. Over half of them were, therefore, aware of the fact that a beggar home exists in their religious centre. Out of our total sample we found only two beggars who had ever been caught and placed in a beggar home.

As far as specific information related to each category of beggar is concerned, we found that the religious mendicants have become 'Sadhus' mainly out of their own willingness rather than because of being forced by any one. There were, however, some who had come into contact with some religious mendicants and so had been influenced into becoming a 'Sadhu'. While around one-fourth had become religious mendicants before attaining the age of 20 years, over 60 per

cent had renounced the world after becoming 25 years of age. Only around 40 per cent had some contact left with the rest of their family but this contact was mainly through letters. Very rarely do these persons visit their family members.

Among the child beggars 30 per cent belonged to families whose traditional occupation is begging while others beg because of their poor economic condition. Only around two-thirds are living with their parents. The others are either orphans or do not have any knowledge about their parents. Among them only around 55 per cent are interested in going to school and so they feel sad when they see other children belonging to their age group going to school. Most of the others have no reaction. However over 70 per cent of the child beggars want to earn a living through manual labour, self employment or service on growing up.

A fair number of female beggars are widows especially from West Bengal. Their proportion is relatively higher in Varanasi and Mathura. The female beggars who are alone suffer from a high sense of insecurity. The female beggars, particularly those in the relatively younger age group, complain of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment was found particularly high in the Ashrams of Brindawan in Mathura.

Almost one-third of the able bodied beggars are not doing anything other than begging, either because they are traditional beggars or are not interested in doing any other work. The others claim that although they tried to get a job

they were not successful in getting a job of their liking. Over 50 per cent of the able bodied beggars accept the fact that they can earn a much higher income if they become wage earners but they are not interested in doing a work which involves so much of physical exertion. Since they are able-bodied individuals they have difficulty in receiving alms as compared to the disabled as well as the religious mendicants.

Our sample of 100 disabled and aged was almost evenly divided in the two categories with the disabled being 52 in number. Of these 50 are lepers. Prior to being forced to beg only 13 were unemployed. Around one-third were cultivators and another one-third were wage earners. Over one-fourth of those who were previously employed in other activities, were earning more than rupees five hundred per month. Their physical disability or their old age, as the case be, has made them helpless to do any other work on a regular basis. Around 15 per cent of the beggars belonging to this category have been discarded by their family members primarily because they are lepers.

As far as the earning of the beggar households is concerned, it was found that the overall average household earnings worked out to be Rs.687 per month. Ayodhya had the highest average earning of Rs.786 per household per month. The government considers a household below poverty line if the annual income of the household is below Rs.11,000. According to this criterion over 80 per cent of the total beggar households are below poverty line.

Begging alone accounts for around 90 per cent of the overall household income. The other activities have a negligible contribution except for earning through wage labour which contributes around 3.5 per cent towards the total income of the household.

When we look at the average daily earnings of the respondents from begging the overall average works out to be less than rupees fifteen per day. Lowest daily earnings of rupees thirteen were found in Hardwar and the highest was in Mathura (Rs.16). Among the different categories of beggars highest earnings were among the religious mendicants (Rs.18) and lowest in the case of the child beggar (Rs.12.7). In each religious centre there are some periods during the year when important religious festivals are held. These periods attract a large number of tourists. These are the periods during which average daily earnings go up by upto 30 per cent.

As can be expected the household incomes of the beggars are mainly spent on food items. Food-items alone account for around 71 per cent of the total household expenditure. Another 13 per cent is spent on non-food items such as fuelwood for cooking, kerosene for lighting and cooking, toilet items and clothing, etc. Entertainment accounts for roughly 9 per cent of total expenditure and the rest is spent on miscellaneous things.

On an average the monthly savings of a household work out to rupees forty. However, it must be noted that savings are being made by only 55 per cent households. Out of the households who are in a position to save something, as many as 72 per cent of them keep these savings with themselves while the rest prefer the safety of a bank. Three main reasons for which these savings are being made are to help during an illness, during shortfalls in income and for meeting expenses on social customs. The main social customs relate to marriage, birth of a child and death in the family. The excess expenditure on social customs over and above their savings is met through borrowings from different sources.

V. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- (a) For any legislation to be really effective it is essential that the various legal aspects should be properly taken care of. In the case of the Prohibition of Beggary Act too we find that there are some shortcomings which call for a modification in the Act. Presently the Act makes it an essential condition that the arrest of beggars and framing of the charge-sheet is a power which wrests with the police department and the Superintendent is, therefore, without any powers. It is, therefore, time to think in terms of delegating some legal powers to the Superintendent for conducting raids and rounding up of beggars from time to time.

(b) The Act of 1975 has only once been amended during 1978. The amended version provides for the detention in a certified institution for a period ranging between a minimum of one year and a maximum of two years. However, we feel that the detention period should be three years. It requires a minimum period of six months to bring about a perceptible change in their physical conditions and mental attitude. After that a few months will be needed to properly identify the type of work for which the inmate has an aptitude. And if the individual is to be properly rehabilitated the training should be proper and for a period of two years.

(c) While it is essential to lay adequate stress on vocational training for the rehabilitation of beggars there is a total lack of follow up measures to ensure that beggars who are released from the certified institutions actually take up an occupation in line with the vocational training which has been given to them. In the first place the provision of rupees one thousand five hundred for assisting a beggar in his rehabilitation, is insufficient considering the present requirements for these activities. The government needs to make an upward revision in this amount. The amounts may vary for different vocations.

Secondly, the individual on being released should be in regular contact with the officials of the beggar home

for a period of at least one year. Even the NGOs of the area can be effectively involved in these follow up measures.

- (d) Since vocational training is important in the rehabilitation of beggars, each beggar home should be fully equipped to provide proper training to its inmates. For this the government must ensure two things. These are well qualified trainers for imparting vocational training and sufficient amount of raw materials and equipment required during the training.

Moreover, vocational training is presently being provided only in traditional activities. New activities which can be introduced are :

1. Repair of Scooters, cycles, rickshaws, gas stoves, pressure cookers and kerosene stoves, etc.
2. Manufacture of candles, agarbathis, match sticks, etc.
3. Other Plumping, etc.

All the new activities which have been cited above do not require a high educational level nor does it require a very high initial investment to start the activity.

- (e) Various aspects of the beggar home have to be improved and then only will it function efficiently. The first thing which we observed was that only one out of the five beggar homes covered by us had a regular Superintendent. The beggar home does not run

efficiently in the absence of a regular superintendent. The government must, therefore, ensure that this post should never be left vacant.

The beggar homes are in a dilapidated condition and in all the repair of the building and boundary wall is long over due. As a result of this the conditions under which the inmates have to stay are very unhygienic and it is equally difficult for the authorities to maintain security arrangements. These buildings need to be repaired as soon as possible.

The existing staff comprises of at the most one watchman and if round the clock vigil is to be kept to ensure that inmates do not run away then there should be adequate security staff working on a shift basis.

In these beggar homes the quality of food being provided is very poor and they also lack as far as medical and entertainment facilities are concerned. At present the government has made a provision of Rs.240 per month per inmate. Recently this monthly allowance has been increased from Rs.240 to Rs.550 in the case of the Juvenile Homes. Thus the allowances of the beggar homes should be brought at par with the Juvenile Homes.

Another serious problem faced by the staff of these beggar homes is that anomalies exist in their pay scales. These anomalies are with respect to two individuals on the same post within the home itself or

between people in the same cadre at the home and in a different department of the state government. It is, therefore, essential that the anomalies be removed and some provision be made to offer avenues of promotion.

Finally, it was observed that most beggar homes have some open space. Previously the inmates were made to work on them to maintain a lawn and to grow different flowers. This practice needs to be revived as it will help to develop a work culture among these inmates and change their attitude towards work.

(f) The rules, under which raids are conducted, say that sick and disabled are not to be caught. Even the children are left alone and so are the female beggars if the city does not have a beggar home for females. As it is the raids are being conducted only occasionally and that too with considerable difficulty. But if a large number of beggars are not rounded up then the very purpose of the raid is lost. Thus every type of beggar should be rounded up during the raid and should be sent to the appropriate institution once it is proved that he or she is begging.

(g) While the Prohibition of Beggary Act aims at putting an end to begging the government should also pass an Act through which giving alms should be treated as an offence. In religious centres, those who wish to feed

the poor should give their donations to the respective beggar homes.

- (h) Our experience based on our visit to the Directorate of Social Welfare and the survey conducted in the five beggar homes revealed that the officials at the head office hardly ever visit the beggar homes and so their knowledge about the problem of the officials of beggar homes or its inmates is rather limited. It should, therefore, be a part of the official duty of the Project Officer as well as other senior officials of the Directorate to make routine inspection of these homes at least once in every three months. This will ensure effective functioning of these homes.
- (i) The Census of 1971 provided various details about the beggars but in the subsequent Census reports no such information is available and so there are no correct estimates with respect to the population of beggars. Even at the state level the Directorate of Social Welfare have made no efforts to estimate the population of beggars. Such data are very important particularly when Welfare Schemes for the rehabilitation of these people are being drawn up. The government should, therefore, start providing these details on a regular basis from the Census of 2001 itself.
- (j) The nine existing beggar homes are all located in the district head quarters. However, one must realize that

a state of the size of Uttar Pradesh, can hardly rehabilitate its beggars with the help of nine beggar homes only. Besides this there are only two beggar homes in the entire state for the female beggars. Thus the state needs to establish some more homes otherwise beggary in the remaining parts of the state can not be controlled. It will not be feasible to establish a beggar home everywhere. The state government can, therefore, think in terms of setting of a few more beggar homes so as to cover all the administrative divisions of the state. Each beggar home will then cater to the needs of a few districts which are in close proximity to it. For example, the beggar home of Lucknow can cover the adjoining districts such as Barabanki, Unnao, Sitapur and Hardoi, etc. Raids should, therefore, be conducted at all places on a regular basis and the beggars thus caught should be detained in the beggar home under whose jurisdiction the area in question lies.

Moreover, if a beggar home covers a cluster of adjoining districts the resources being spent by the state would be utilized in an optimal way since the beggar homes will then have sufficient number of inmates through out the year.

Finally, it must be understood very clearly that the above mentioned suggestions will only make the

government legislation effective and beggar homes more efficient and partly reduce the incidence of begging. However, until and unless the government does not take adequate steps to eradicate poverty from the society, to provide education, to curb social evils, and ensures that every individual is able to obtain gainful employment, beggary can not be eliminated from the society. The beggar homes can, at best, assist in the rehabilitation of some individuals but unless the state can ensure that the basic minimum needs such as food, shelter and clothing of the lowest strata are fulfilled, the people will have no alternative but to fall back on begging as the only means of their livelihood.